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SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)
4th meeting held on
Thursday, 14 October 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. KALPAGE	(Sri Lanka)
later:	Mr. CHIRILA (Vice-Chairman)	(Romania)
later:	Mr. KALPAGE (Chairman)	(Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 116: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)*

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* Items considered together.

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CONTENTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 117: ACTIVITIES OF THOSE FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 118: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)*

AGENDA ITEM 119: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued)*

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.

2. Mr. CORBIN (Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee) said that the mandate for increasing the participation of non-independent Territories in programmes and activities of the United Nations went back to 1950. In recent years the General Assembly had reaffirmed the responsibility in the matter of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the system in a number of resolutions, namely, resolutions 45/18, 46/170, 47/16 and 47/22.

3. Most recently, on 12 August 1993, the Special Committee had adopted a resolution, contained in document A/48/23 (part IV), which requested the strengthening of existing measures of support and the formulation of appropriate programmes of assistance to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

4. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 1990/60, 1991/68 and 1992/59, had provided similar mandates.

5. Since its establishment in 1989, the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries had confirmed its commitment to implement to the extent feasible those mandates of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council. In its resolution 33 (XIII) of 1992, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) had identified the need for resources to carry out an ongoing examination of access by the non-independent Territories to United Nations activities. In its resolution 37 (XIV) of 1992, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee had approved the report of the first meeting of the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries, held that same year. The report had endorsed the granting of observer status to those non-independent Territories which were associate members of United Nations regional economic commissions. Resolution 37 (XIV) had also called for collaboration between the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee and the Special Committee.

6. The non-independent Territories of the Caribbean and Pacific had put forward their position regarding their participation in the work and programmes of the organizations of the United Nations system in various forums, such as the Pacific regional seminar in observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on Decolonization, held in Vanuatu in 1990; the Caribbean regional seminar, held in Barbados in 1990; the Caribbean regional seminar to review the special development needs of island Territories, held in Grenada in 1992; and the Pacific regional seminar to review political, economic and social conditions in small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, held in Papua New Guinea in June 1993. At the latter seminar participants had called upon the Special

(Mr. Corbin)

Committee to request the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to include provisions in their resolutions for Governments and authorities in the Territories to participate as observers in technical meetings.

7. In furtherance of those mandates, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee had launched an action plan intended to maximize participation by non-independent Territories in the programmes of the regional economic commissions, increase the number of Non-Self-Governing territories enjoying associate membership or observer status with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, and provide for observer status for non-independent Territories at technical meetings, conferences and activities approved by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The latter component of the action plan might be of particular relevance to the Fourth Committee.

8. When the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council approved resolutions for technical conferences, invitations to attend were generally issued to representatives of national liberation movements, to heads of specialized agencies and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, but there had been no provision for non-independent Territories to participate in such activities. Nevertheless, the CDCC Working Group had participated as an observer in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992, and in the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

9. In contrast, at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, scheduled for 1994, initially there had been no provision for non-independent Territories to participate, although subsequently a recommendation had been made to the General Assembly to invite associate members of regional commissions to participate in the Conference as observers, without the right to vote. Similarly, Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/93 had invited regional commissions to convene meetings to review issues relating to the International Conference on Population and Development from a regional perspective and to propose future actions, which had enabled the non-independent Caribbean Territories to participate in the meetings convened by ECLAC in preparation for that Conference and had led to endorsement by the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference on Population and Development of a recommendation that the non-independent Territories should be allowed to participate in the Conference as observers.

10. The Working Group would also take steps to participate as an observer in the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, the World Summit for Social Development, the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies of Latin America and the Caribbean Region, and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

11. The CDCC Working Group commended the member States of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council for providing non-independent countries which were already associate members of regional economic commissions with the opportunity to participate in the technical and economic activities of the

(Mr. Corbin)

United Nations system. However it was important for the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, in drafting their resolutions on such activities, to provide for observer status for non-independent Territories from the outset, since it was difficult and costly for the Working Group to recommend amendments to rules of procedure in each case. The Committee might wish to consider communicating that concern to the Second Committee and to the Economic and Social Council.

12. It was also noteworthy that, having achieved observer status, many Governments could not participate in the activities because of financial considerations. That problem could be partially solved through a reprogramming of existing resources, such as the possibility of reviewing the relevance of the Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance. Savings from a reduction in the number of meetings of the Subcommittee could be used to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories to attend the technical and economic conferences in question. Further, such Territories should be eligible to access the various voluntary funds which were often set up to assist developing countries to participate in particular activities.

13. Lastly, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, in its resolution 37 (XIV) of December 1992, had called for consultations with the Special Committee in order to request assistance to enable the Working Group to carry out its ongoing analysis on the access of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean region to the United Nations system. In that connection, the Fourth Committee might wish to request the Special Committee to hold consultations with CDCC in order to solve the problem.

14. Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea) said that he wished to correct a comment made by Mr. Corbin and pointed out that plans had already been made for the Special Committee to hold consultations with the regional organizations in order to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee, he had attended the Grenada meeting in order to consult with the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, but since procedural difficulties had arisen at that time, he requested Mr. Corbin's assistance in order to hold those consultations.

15. The United Nations had made it possible for representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to participate in the discussion of such issues as climate change at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and other activities. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) had taken its own steps in that regard. He wondered whether representation through the Chairman of the CDCC Working Group and CARICOM was sufficient or whether the Non-Self-Governing Territories should have direct access to those meetings. He would appreciate it if Mr. Corbin would consider, with the parties concerned, what the most suitable mechanism would be for giving concrete form to such participation. On the one hand, that procedure might cause difficulties for the administering Powers. On the other hand, there was a need to avoid the possibility that some administering Powers might have two votes when participating in the meetings, namely, their own and that of the Territories under their administration.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

16. He inquired whether Mr. Corbin thought that the work of CDCC or the other bodies in which it participated had had a favourable impact on the Territories represented by CDCC. For example, he wondered whether Mr. Corbin felt that the participation of CDCC at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had been effective for the Virgin Islands or the other Territories. The Special Committee wished to know, in particular, what the prospects were with regard to the political status of the United States Virgin Islands after the recent referendum.

17. Mr. CORBIN (Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee) expressed appreciation on behalf of the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries to Mr. Lohia for his ongoing efforts to increase the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in United Nations technical and socio-economic programmes.

18. The Working Group had met for the first time prior to the holding in Grenada, in December 1992, of the fourteenth session of CDCC and was composed of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and self-governing Territories that were already independent and, for that reason, did not fall within the purview of the Fourth Committee.

19. With regard to the holding of consultations with the Special Committee, he hoped that the resolutions adopted at the fourteenth session of CDCC and those that it adopted in the future would help to set up a mechanism to facilitate such consultations, taking particular account of the fact that although CDCC activities focused on Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territories, they also had an impact on the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific. As a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), CDCC was holding consultations with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in order to ensure that the work of the CDCC Working Group also met the needs and expectations of the Territories situated in the Pacific region.

20. With regard to the favourable impact which the work of CDCC and its participation in activities such as UNCED had on the Territories in the Caribbean region, he said that CDCC transmitted information on such activities to those Territories and thought that many of the Governments concerned had been able to incorporate that information into their own development programmes, particularly in the field of the environment and use of natural resources. Similarly, in the field of population and development, at its fourteenth session CDCC had given extensive consideration to the question of population density, taking into account the difficulties which it caused for small island Territories and the developing countries in the Caribbean region which were non-self-governing. Consideration of that question was continuing within the framework of the preparatory work being carried out by CDCC for the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. In that connection, there was concern as to whether those Non-Self-Governing Territories would have the necessary resources to participate in the Conference if they were granted observer status.

21. He regretted that he was unable to reply to the question concerning the referendum on political status held in the United States Virgin Islands on

(Mr. Corbin)

11 October 1993 since he was appearing before the Fourth Committee not as a representative of his Government, but rather in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries. If the Chairman of the Fourth Committee so wished, the representative of the Government of that Territory would be better able to report on the results of the referendum.

22. Mr. Corbin withdrew.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (continued)

23. Mr. MCKINNON (New Zealand) nominated Mr. Ngoni Sengwe (Zimbabwe) for one of the posts of Vice-Chairman.

24. Mr. FUENTES-IBAÑEZ (Bolivia) supported the nomination of Mr. Sengwe.

25. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS (A/C.4/48/2/Add.3)

26. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that he had received a request for a hearing relating to Western Sahara, which was contained in document A/C.4/48/2/Add.3. He took it that the Committee wished to grant that request.

27. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)*

Hearing of petitioners

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Jarat Chopra took a place at the petitioner's table.

29. Mr. CHOPRA, speaking in his personal capacity, recalled the Secretary-General's visit to Western Sahara at the beginning of June 1993 in order to determine the criteria for holding a referendum and the initiative by the United States which had led to an agreement in the middle of July 1993 that the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO would hold direct talks.

30. He had been part of an unofficial mission that had visited the area from 8 to 16 July in order to assess the obstacles to the referendum process. He was appearing before the Fourth Committee in order to present his own personal findings.

31. Both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO had expressed irreconcilable views concerning the nature and focus of the talks. Although Morocco had not discussed with the mission the issues to be considered at the talks, it had indicated that it would prefer the talks to focus on local issues, without any reference to obstacles to the peace process. The Frente POLISARIO, on the other hand, had felt that the stalemate in the peace process should be included in the issues to be discussed.

(Mr. Chopra)

32. Morocco had not discussed with the mission the composition of the delegation it would be sending to the direct talks, although it had assured the United Nations that the Moroccan delegation would be led by Ambassador Ahmed Senoussi. The Frente POLISARIO would have preferred holding talks with higher-level officials. However, on the day of the talks, the Moroccan delegation had been led by local Saharan representatives who had been accompanied by Moroccan officials acting as observers only.

33. The only result of the talks had been that the parties had agreed to meet again. However, both parties seemed prepared to approach future talks in the same irreconcilable manner. Since Morocco had failed to fulfil its commitments in the past and had manipulated the agreements reached, the Frente POLISARIO had maintained throughout the period leading to the direct talks that they could take place only if the United Nations attended. The Frente POLISARIO had further informed the mission that other governmental and non-governmental international observers should be present in future talks in order to testify to the agreements concluded.

34. The United Nations had been unable to guarantee agreements reached between the parties. The modalities of the meeting had never really been confirmed. Moreover, Morocco had changed the agenda of the talks and the level and nature of its delegation. Since no agreements had been reached between the parties regarding relations with the press, Morocco had manipulated the press to stir up controversy.

35. With regard to the peace process, both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO had informed the mission that they would accept the referendum results. The Frente POLISARIO had emphasized that it would only accept results reached in a just, free and fair referendum. Since the options for the referendum - sovereign independence or integration with Morocco - were mutually exclusive, neither party was willing to participate in the process unless it was sure of the outcome.

36. Both parties disagreed on how to define the electorate and applied different criteria with respect to voter eligibility. The Security Council had decided that until further agreement could be reached on other criteria of voter eligibility, the 1974 Spanish census would constitute the basis of the Western Sahara peace plan. Morocco preferred to reach agreement on all criteria before registering voters although there was significant disagreement regarding the voter verification role of chiefs of tribes. Those problems had led to disagreement regarding the presence of observers during the voter identification process.

37. Both parties had at different times, accused the United Nations of not being impartial. The appointment of a new United Nations Secretary-General seemed to have altered the Organization's relations with each of the parties.

38. The transfer of people to the Western Sahara to guarantee a favourable outcome of the elections for Morocco had greatly complicated the peace process. The Moroccan proposal to add new voters was hindering the voter identification process.

39. The main task of the military arm of the United Nations mission was to observe the cease-fire. There had been a number of cease-fire violations, mostly by the Moroccans, but since there were few means of verifying those allegations, it had become increasingly difficult to prove the violations.

40. The United Nations military units would rely completely on the good will of the parties during the electoral process. However, in view of the intransigence of the parties to date, there was no indication that the electoral process would be calm. Therefore, the following criteria could be used to tackle current obstacles to the peace process in the Western Sahara and break the stalemate in the identification of eligible voters.

41. First, the Settlement Plan developed by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and accepted by both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO should remain the backbone of the Western Saharan peace process in order to preserve international interest in the area and guarantee multilateral approaches to settling the conflict. Second, the peace process must continue to be based on the consent of both parties to the United Nations and OAU Settlement Plan and to its subsequent interpretation and implementation. Without continuing consent, it was highly likely that hostilities would resume since each party interpreted the peace process differently. Multilateral actions were required to ensure that the parties abided by the obligations they had entered into. Third, the 1974 census constituted the basis of the Settlement Plan and determined who could be allowed to vote in the referendum on self-determination as agreed by the parties. The opinion of the Security Council that registration of voters should be on the basis of the 1974 census was a recognition of the fact that the census provided the only objective and reliable statement of voter eligibility. Fourth, priority consideration must be given to the maintenance of the cease-fire which would call for restructuring the security arrangements for the remainder of the operation. However, it was unlikely that both parties would cooperate as the process entered the balloting phase and the referendum results were announced. Fifth, given the intransigence demonstrated by either party to date as a result of the fear of manipulation by the other party, the negotiations and agreements reached in addition to the Settlement Plan should be recorded faithfully for the results of the referendum to be recognized and accepted. Independent governmental and non-governmental observers as well as United Nations and OAU representatives could be entrusted with the task of verifying results and fostering openness. Observers should be present during all negotiations and witness the identification of voters. Sixth, the parties should be encouraged to schedule regular direct meetings. Their representatives at meetings throughout the process should be of high rank to ensure continued compliance with the agreements and commitments entered into. Finally, as there was a broad international interest in preventing the manipulation of the Settlement Plan, bilateral support should be provided for each stage of the multilateral process. Such support should be intensified in order to ensure in particular the fulfilment of the agreements reached between the two parties.

42. What was missing from the process was an ongoing negotiating capability between the two parties. Consequently, each phase of the peace plan - the cease-fire, the identification of voters and probably the referendum - had been plagued by disagreements, misunderstandings between or manipulations by the

(Mr. Chopra)

parties. A mechanism was needed that could engage the parties and other international actors in a continuous dialogue. Such a mechanism could be similar to the five-nation Joint Monitoring Commission that had provided considerable assistance in steering the Namibia peace process to a successful conclusion. On the basis of that experience, a Western Sahara Joint Monitoring Commission composed of the Frente POLISARIO, Morocco and other key member States could be established.

43. Mr. Chopra withdrew.

44. Mr. SENOUSSI (Morocco) said that he did not wish to enter into polemics with Mr. Chopra. However, he wished Mr. Chopra had a better knowledge of the actual situation in Western Sahara and had been more specific and more impartial in his information.

45. Mr. Chopra should be aware that the talks that had been held had been serious and that during those talks consultations had been carried out with three members of the Security Council. The group representing Morocco in those negotiations had been known by all the participants, who had fully accepted it. He himself had participated in those negotiations, and had fully informed the Security Council of the results.

46. He agreed with Mr. Chopra that the 1974 Spanish census constituted the basis of the electoral process. However, Mr. Chopra should know that in various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, additional rules had been laid down to determine who would be authorized to vote.

47. Morocco's relations with the Secretary-General were excellent. Morocco believed that the work of the United Nations in relation to the referendum in Western Sahara was highly commendable. It was Mr. Chopra's view of the work of the United Nations in Western Sahara that was unsatisfactory. For example, Mr. Chopra had made absolutely no reference to Security Council resolutions 609 (1988) and 725 (1991) concerning Western Sahara.

48. Mr. Chopra should seek further information about Western Sahara. Morocco was available to Mr. Chopra to provide the additional information he had not been able or known how to obtain.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 116: INFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 117: ACTIVITIES OF THOSE FOREIGN ECONOMIC AND OTHER INTERESTS WHICH IMPEDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES IN TERRITORIES UNDER COLONIAL DOMINATION AND EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 118: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 119: OFFERS BY MEMBER STATES OF STUDY AND TRAINING FACILITIES FOR INHABITANTS OF NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (continued) (A/48/3 (Chapter V (sect. A), A/48/23 (Parts II to VII), A/48/95-S/25363, 224 and Corr.1 and Add.1-3, 426, 436 and 443; A/AC.109/1137-1139, 1141-1153, 1155-1158, 1161, 1163, 1164 and 1170; A/AC.109/L.1805; E/1993/98; S/25170, S/25818 and S/26185)

General debate

49. The CHAIRMAN said that the general debate on agenda items 12, 18, 116, 117, 118, and 119 was open.

50. Mr. LOHIA (Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) said that he hoped that the decolonization budget had not been affected by the merger of the Special Political Committee and the Fourth Committee. He also hoped that the staff assigned to decolonization matters would be maintained at the necessary level.

51. With regard to the process that had led to the Special Committee's recommendations, contained in its report, he said that the mandate entrusted to the Special Committee since its establishment in 1961 was very clear: monitoring the political, economic and social conditions in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and reporting to the General Assembly on the progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The Special Committee had carried out its mandate faithfully since its establishment. It had patiently and methodically heard petitioners, sent visiting missions to Territories, disseminated information on decolonization with a view to mobilizing public opinion and submitted reports to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

52. The Special Committee, while remaining faithful to its mandate, had continued to keep its approach and methods of work under constant review in order to adjust them to changing circumstances. That process had gained renewed

(Mr. Lohia)

impetus since 1990 owing to the positive developments that had occurred in international relations since the end of the cold war.

53. Since the time when the Special Committee had begun its work, the majority of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had been able to exercise their right to self-determination and had been admitted as Members of the United Nations. The General Assembly had set the goal of complete decolonization by the year 2000 for the 18 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and had declared the period 1990-2000 the "International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism". Although, as the General Assembly had repeatedly reaffirmed, such factors as area, population size or remoteness should not prevent a Territory from freely exercising its right to self-determination, the Special Committee was aware that complete decolonization by the year 2000 would require innovative and realistic solutions. For that reason, over the past three years the Special Committee had concentrated on a new approach to decolonization, while adhering firmly to the principles of the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and had paid particular attention to the specific needs of each of those Territories.

54. Several government leaders of the Territories had clearly indicated that an acceleration of the economic and social development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories would facilitate the exercise of their right to self-determination. In response to those concerns, the Special Committee had systematically concentrated its efforts, within the context of the International Decade, on the search for specific measures that would promote that development. It had also initiated consultations with regional groups and organizations and invited them to increase their assistance to those Territories within a regional context and to facilitate their integration into their respective regions.

55. The regional seminars that the Special Committee organized each year under the Plan of Action for the Decade enabled the countries of the region to learn more about the specific needs of the remaining Territories. For example, the regional seminar held in June 1993 at Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) had given rise to a very fruitful exchange of views among representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the South Pacific and various regional organizations on how best to assist the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the region and to promote the exercise by their peoples of their right to self-determination.

56. Earlier in 1993, the Committee had accepted the invitation from the Government of New Zealand to visit Tokelau, a Territory under its administration. That visit would assist the Committee in further improving its knowledge of the specific conditions in that Territory, thereby contributing significantly to the decolonization process as a whole.

57. In his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee and as a representative of that region, he wished to thank the Government of New Zealand for its continued and exemplary cooperation with the Special Committee of 24 and hoped that the other administering Powers would come forward with similar invitations to visit Territories under their administration.

(Mr. Lohia)

58. In conclusion, the Special Committee had proven that it could adjust to changing circumstances and would continue to do so. That was why it had decided to review some of the recommendations made a few months previously in order to reflect the important events which had recently occurred in South Africa.

59. Mr. Chirila (Romania) took the Chair.

60. Mr. CHU Guangyou (China) said that the total eradication of colonialism was an important task for the United Nations. Since the adoption in 1960 of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, a large number of Asian, African and Latin American countries had achieved self-determination and independence. The Special Committee had made an enormous contribution to that endeavour, and had won universal praise from the international community.

61. Although remarkable progress had been made, the decolonization process had not yet been concluded. There still existed a dozen or so Non-Self-Governing Territories in the world, and innovative approaches must be taken to accelerate that process in order to enable the world to be free from colonialism in the twenty-first century.

62. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration, the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories had the inalienable right to freedom and independence. China had all along supported those people in their just cause and held that the right of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to decide their political status and to engage in economic, social and cultural development, according to their own aspirations and national interests, should be respected and safeguarded. No country had the right to send troops into such Territories or to establish military bases or facilities there; moreover, foreign economic groups operating in those Territories should fully respect the interests and aspirations of the local populations. The administering Powers were under obligation to promote political, economic and social development in the Territories in order to create the conditions for the inhabitants to exercise their right to self-determination. The United Nations and its agencies should pay more attention to the reasonable requests and aspirations of the inhabitants of the Territories and should continue to work towards the ultimate removal of colonialism.

63. The purpose of the merging of the Special Political Committee and the Committee on Decolonization was to improve the efficiency of the General Assembly's work. He hoped that the new Committee would proceed to solid and effective work and achieve further progress towards the realization of the noble goal of the eradication of colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination. His delegation was ready to work with other members of the Committee and to contribute to the effective implementation of the Charter and the Declaration.

64. Mr. COOLS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its 12 member States, welcomed the merging of the Fourth Committee and the Special Political Committee, which had been actively encouraged by the Community and which was in response to a request made by the Community the previous year. The member States of the Community would continue to work towards greater rationalization of the Committee's agenda and would seek to ensure that the

(Mr. Cools, Belgium)

Committee took into account the major changes that had taken place in the field of decolonization.

65. One of the most significant achievements of the post-cold-war era had been the major contribution of the United Nations to the process of decolonization. Almost half of its current membership had gained their independence after the creation of the Organization.

66. The European Community and its member States wished to reaffirm their support for the principle of self-determination and for the measures adopted under the Charter for the purpose of eradicating colonialism, irrespective of the geographic location and the number of inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

67. In previous sessions, the European Community and its member States had drawn attention to the fact that the draft resolutions and draft decisions submitted to the Committee usually contained substantive and formal elements that were hardly helpful to the interests of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Since then, they had noted with satisfaction that the language of some draft resolutions had become more moderate and less contentious, particularly the draft resolution on the specialized agencies, which was worded in more balanced terms. However, the substance of some texts continued to cause serious concern, in that they detracted from the Committee's credibility and contributed nothing to the search for the consensus which should exist on the subject of decolonization. Indeed, those texts were based on the unacceptable premise that Non-Self-Governing Territories were unable to exercise their right to self-determination only because the administering Powers denied them that right.

68. The countries of the European Community had taken note of the announcement that consultations were being held with a view to amending some of the draft resolutions, and they hoped that the amended texts would take full account of the events that had occurred in South Africa and of the reaction of the General Assembly to those events. Nevertheless, he wished to reiterate the objection in principle of the States members of the European Community to the references to apartheid which were still contained in the drafts considered by the Committee. Given the fact that Namibia had gained its independence in March 1990, the debate on apartheid in the context of decolonization no longer made any sense. He wished, moreover, to reiterate his objections to the draft decision on military activities, since that topic was not included among the items which the General Committee had allocated to the Committee.

69. He wished, finally, to refer to two regional problems of particular importance to the European Community and its member States. Both the Community and its member States supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a solution to the question of East Timor which was just and acceptable to the international community and which fully respected the legitimate aspirations and interests of the inhabitants of East Timor. They also supported the dialogue without preconditions between Portugal and Indonesia which was sponsored by the Secretary-General.

70. With respect to Western Sahara, the European Community and its member States wished to commend the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in

(Mr. Cools, Belgium)

Western Sahara (MINURSO) on the work it had done and to reaffirm their support for the United Nations Settlement Plan adopted in Security Council resolutions 658 (1990), 690 (1991), 725 (1991), and 809 (1993). They hoped that the Plan would contribute to the holding, as early as possible, of the referendum in Western Sahara, organized and supervised by the United Nations in cooperation with OAU. In that connection, the countries of the EEC appealed to the parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and to refrain from any action which could stand in the way of the early implementation of the Plan.

71. Mr. AHAMED (India) said that the Committee could be proud of its achievements in the field of decolonization. The number of Non-Self-Governing Territories had fallen from 64 in 1961 to 8 in 1992, which was indicative of the universal support which decolonization enjoyed from the international community. The end of the cold war presented the United Nations and the world community with an historic opportunity to shape the destiny of the world and to bring to fruition the mission it had undertaken several decades previously. It was essential for the Committee to take into account those recent developments and to work in a constructive way in pursuit of the noble goal of decolonization.

72. As a founding Member of the United Nations and a sponsor of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, India had striven unremittingly for the basic rights and human dignity of those who similarly yearned for their own freedom. His country had always had the firm conviction that independence and sovereignty were the most important attributes for the establishment of international cooperation in all areas, based on a firm foundation.

73. While many of the objectives of the Declaration had been achieved during the previous 33 years, many problems still remained on the agenda. The fact that the last decade of the century had been declared the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the proposal of a plan of action for the Decade underlined the need to act with increased determination. The new-found spirit of cooperation, political realism, understanding and flexibility should guide the international community in the implementation of the plan. Administering Powers and other States alike had an equal responsibility in that task.

74. Some of the issues on the agenda were nearing resolution, while others were being tackled in a satisfactory manner. The agreement to establish a Transitional Executive Council in South Africa, to ensure that the first non-racial elections, scheduled for April 1994, would be conducted in a free and fair manner had made the process of transition to a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa irreversible. For the first time, the South African people would be able to exercise to the full their right to elect a Government without discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or race. He hoped that, with the lifting of the economic sanctions against South Africa, decided upon by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/1, the South African people would be able to achieve economic stability and progress in a post-apartheid South Africa.

75. Although progress on the referendum in Western Sahara had been slow during the past year, the spirit of cooperation and understanding between the two

(Mr. Ahamed, India)

parties and the commencement of direct talks between them, were positive developments and a source of optimism for the international community. His delegation expressed its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in that direction.

76. In regard to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) and New Caledonia, the ongoing dialogue between the parties concerned was encouraging. Most of the other Non-Self-Governing Territories were small islands in the Pacific and Caribbean, and the international community supported the right of each of those Territories to determine its own political future. The administering Powers had a heavy responsibility to protect the vulnerable economies and ecologies of those islands, while continuing to give their peoples the opportunity to determine freely what was in their best interests. The Special Committee on Decolonization should also support the interests of those Territories. He called on the administering Powers and the Special Committee to work jointly to that end.

77. Mr. ARKWRIGHT (United Kingdom) said that he wished to address two key issues in the Committee: first, the continued inability, or, more probably, the unwillingness, of the Special Committee to appreciate the considerable difference between self-determination and independence. Other options were available. He welcomed the comments of the representative of India, which he endorsed, and observed that the record of the United Kingdom on decolonization was a good one and was well documented. His Government regarded the wishes of the people living in the dependent Territories as being of primary importance and found it difficult to understand why that was not the guiding principle of the Special Committee.

78. His Government continued to take most seriously its obligations under the Charter to promote self-government in the dependent territories of the United Kingdom and, in cooperation with the locally elected governments, to ensure that their constitutional frameworks continued to meet the wishes of their peoples. Each of the dependent territories held regular and free elections.

79. The United Kingdom also took its obligations seriously in responding to the economic needs of its dependent territories. In his view, the content of the draft resolution submitted to the Committee on the question of foreign economic interests was again disappointing. The draft did not take into account the benefits that foreign economic interests brought to dependent territories.

80. He acknowledged that, in the current year, the Special Committee was making an effort to face up to reality. He greeted that attitude with satisfaction and hoped that the process would accelerate and that, in 1994, his statement to the Fourth Committee would be able to take a more positive outlook.

81. Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) said that his country regarded the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples as very important, and that, although the problem of decolonization was gradually being resolved, the Declaration had still not been implemented to the full and a small number of territories had still not attained independence.

(Mr. Sidorov, Russian Federation)

82. The Special Committee's agenda consisted of essential items aimed at creating conditions favourable to self-determination. While the Committee should give the Non-Self-Governing Territories unconditional support, at the same time it must recognize economic realities. There were many options for self-determination.

83. Under the provisions of the Charter, the administering Powers were required to bear in mind the well-being of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, in particular their economic and social advancement. It was essential to regulate the activity of foreign economic interests and also that the Non-Self-Governing Territories should receive economic assistance in order to be able to integrate into the world economy. It was also very important that there should be no military activities or nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

84. His delegation supported the rationalization of the Special Committee's activities and regarded the merger of the Fourth Committee and the Special Political Committee as a positive step. Although, at the Committee's summer session, decisions had been taken by consensus, in particular through the efforts of the Chairman of the Committee of 24, he himself was worried about the duplication of items and the fact that elements were being introduced that altered the Committee's mandate, thus contributing to confrontations with the administering Powers. The Committee could not carry out its duties in such conditions, as his delegation had pointed out at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly. As it stood, the draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration was far from reflecting the real state of affairs, and he hoped that the introduction of further amendments would avoid any confrontation.

85. Mr. MURDOCH (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community, said that the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was still not over and much remained to be done. Although the United Nations could be proud of its work to eradicate colonialism, some countries had still not achieved independence.

86. There were still many dependent territories in the present-day world, most of them in the Caribbean region. The delegations from that region were afraid that attention would cease to be paid to those small islands and that it would be assumed that decolonization was over although those territories had not achieved independence. He rejected that viewpoint and added that the persistence of colonialism still constituted a challenge to all Members of the United Nations. As long as there was a single dependent territory, the principle of self-determination proclaimed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and in the Charter of the United Nations would still not have been fully applied.

87. The fact that some of the territories in the Caribbean continued to be dependent had important implications for the other States of the area and constituted an obstacle to the economic advancement of the whole region. The fate of the dependent territories in the Caribbean was inextricably bound up with that of their sister independent States in the region.

(Mr. Murdoch, Antigua and Barbuda)

88. At the time when many of the States of the region, such as Antigua and Barbuda, achieved their independence, it was still a widely held view that full independence was not appropriate for small States. It was to be hoped that the performance of those States in the United Nations had dispelled any fears concerning the viability of small States, which was determined more by economics than by population or size.

89. The list of administering Powers in the Caribbean region included some of the richest and most powerful States in the international community. Some of those States sat on the Security Council and could deploy vast military and economic resources in defence of various principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The presence of those Powers in the Caribbean, therefore, presented a unique opportunity for the small States of the region to be able to exercise fully their right to self-determination.

90. Self-determination was an aspiration recognized in many General Assembly resolutions. There was need for the United Nations to play a greater part in overseeing the political process that took a people from dependency to full sovereignty. There was also a need for the United Nations to be able to make an objective assessment of an administering Power's performance as it related to creating the necessary conditions for the exercise of self-determination. The United Nations should be able to interpose itself in the delicate and complex political relationship between the administering Powers and the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. To do so, it needed to be able to present full and impartial periodic reports and to dispatch fact-finding missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories.

91. The peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean were strongly in favour of a revitalization in the field of decolonization, accelerating the process of access to full independence and evaluating the performance of the administering Powers. In the light of the proclamation by the United Nations of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, that task was more urgent that ever.

92. Mr. LAMAMRA (Algeria) stressed the obstacles that continued to block full implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples despite the United Nations great efforts in the area of decolonization. The United Nations could be proud to number among its Members so many sovereign and independent States that had at one time been colonies. However, the very extent of that progress made finishing the collective work of decolonization even more important and more urgent.

93. Algeria's fidelity to the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination was imprinted on the collective conscience of the Algerian people. The generation that had freed Algeria from colonialism had transmitted its belief in that principle to succeeding generations, and it had become one of the guidelines of Algerian foreign policy. Algeria's solidarity with liberation movements had been duly recognized in the history books of many of the States represented in the General Assembly.

94. Algeria had many reasons to be legitimately alert to developments in the peace process in Western Sahara. Undeniably, the situation in Western Sahara

(Mr. Lamamra, Algeria)

was one of incomplete decolonization. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement, the International Court of Justice and other organs of the United Nations had correctly situated the question of Western Sahara in that context.

95. The search for a peaceful, just and lasting solution begun in 1985 on the initiative of the Fourth Committee had consisted of intense collaboration between the United Nations and OAU through a unique mechanism that had produced a coherent package of settlement proposals in 1988. The two parties to the conflict, Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), had accepted those proposals as well as a plan adopted by the Security Council in its resolutions 658 (1990) and 690 (1991).

96. The cease-fire had gone into effect on 6 September 1991, but a number of unexpected obstacles had impeded systematic implementation of the plan. Arduous talks continued on certain terms of its interpretation and implementation. Neither the United Nations nor OAU could resign itself to sponsoring a referendum whose outcome was predetermined by an imbalance in the terms in question. On the contrary, they should do everything in their power to enable the people of Western Sahara to express its will under unquestionably free and fair conditions.

97. For the referendum process to succeed, the two parties must first reach an agreement on the terms of implementation of the plan. He therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's tireless efforts to bring about direct talks between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, which had taken place from 17 to 19 July 1993 at Laayoune.

98. Algeria shared the view of the Security Council that those direct talks constituted a positive new development. It was deeply convinced that resuming and intensifying direct talks between the two parties could bring them closer on all of the outstanding issues of the settlement plan as well as on other important issues not contained in it.

99. The current international situation offered examples, such as those of the Middle East and South Africa, that demonstrated the virtues of direct dialogue between parties to a conflict. It proved that if situations were studied from a long-term perspective, it was possible to find solutions, no matter how complex the problems.

100. The two parties to the conflict in Western Sahara knew that they could count on the international community's interest and participation in any efforts to accelerate the achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting solution. They also knew that Algeria had never abandoned its hope for an historic reconciliation between the two neighbouring and sister peoples and that it had never stinted its efforts to contribute to such a reconciliation. Both parties to the conflict also knew that building a united, fraternal and solidary Greater Maghreb was a major project that was too important to be impeded by continuing fratricidal strife.

101. The Chairman resumed the Chair.

102. Mr. TELLES RIBEIRO (Brazil) said that the General Assembly's decision to merge the Special Political Committee and the Fourth Committee was very wise and timely because it strengthened and accelerated the process of revitalizing and rationalizing the work of the Assembly. It also pointed to a shared hope that the process of decolonization, which had been one of the most fruitful in the history of the United Nations, would soon be finished. The General Assembly had declared the decade beginning in 1990 to be the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It was the duty of the members and the task of the Committee to remain firm in their commitment to give all colonial peoples and Territories the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination and choose their future freely during that period.

103. In that endeavour, they had the cooperation of the Special Committee on decolonization, which over the years had played an indispensable role in making the work of the Fourth Committee faster and more effective. The momentous changes taking place in the world made it necessary for the Special Committee to improve and diversify its work. However, it should not abandon its main objectives: promoting the cause of self-determination with a view to the total eradication of colonialism and broadening the political and economic bases of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to prepare them for self-determination, including independence.

104. His delegation stressed the importance of establishing the economic bases the Non-Self-Governing Territories needed in order to exercise their right to self-determination. The United Nations and the administering Powers should ensure that any economic activity to take place in a Non-Self-Governing Territory would place the needs and interests of its people first and would not harm its environment.

105. The presence of military installations and bases in Non-Self-Governing Territories was increasingly questionable in the post-cold-war era. They were an obstacle to implementing the principles of the Charter and the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, since the large-scale use of local resources for military purposes could adversely affect the economic development of those Territories. Furthermore, Non-Self-Governing Territories and their adjacent areas should be free from all testing, deployment or stockpiling of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.

106. His delegation reaffirmed its appreciation of the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a fair and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor and reiterated its support for the continuing dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

107. With respect to Western Sahara, Brazil had welcomed the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the referendum, the actions taken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in order to allow the people of Western Sahara to determine freely its political destiny and the holding of direct talks between the two parties at Laayoune in July 1993. It hoped those talks would soon be resumed.

108. Lastly, on the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Brazil reaffirmed its support for continuing the constructive dialogue undertaken by

(Mr. Telles Ribeiro, Brazil)

the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom with a view to finding a peaceful and fair solution to the dispute over their sovereignty.

109. Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu) congratulated the Chairman of the Special Committee on his excellent statement, with which he fully agreed. He also supported the statement made by the representative of Brazil, especially his closing remarks.

110. The Chairman asked the delegations holding consultations on a number of the Special Committee's recommendations to accelerate that process and to submit their proposals as soon as possible so that the Fourth Committee could get on with its discussion of those items.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.